

## CSIRO list of Australian vertebrates: a reference with conservation status. Second edition.

by Mark Clayton, John C Wombey, Ian J Mason, R Terry Chesser and Alice Wells  
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To paraphrase the Bard: What's in a name? That which we call an Orange-bellied Parrot would be as threatened by any other name. That's not to say, of course that names are unimportant, and this is particularly the case with scientific names. And as with all areas of scientific study there is always a bit of movement going on. Hence there is a regular need to update the names and groupings of vertebrates.

This book is the second edition of a work that was originally published in 1998. As the authors say (p. 1), 'numerous changes in intervening years' in the taxonomy and nomenclature of Australian vertebrates make a new edition timely.

Most of those changes are reflected in this new edition, although some revisions in the higher level systematics of Australian vertebrates are not included. Having said as much, the authors do not indicate either what those changes were or why they haven't been included. However, this edition does provide information not presented in its predecessor. This includes detail of all currently recognised and named subspecies; distributional information for species found in all Commonwealth territories (e.g. Norfolk Island and Australian Antarctic Territory); more complete nomenclatural data for all species; and a supplementary table of vagrant and accidental mammal records.

The structure of the book is straightforward and easy to follow. It begins with an introductory section of general information, wherein are presented such matters as the rationale for the book, an explanation of the types of information the work contains, and details of the sources of background data upon which the core of the book is based. In the four sections that follow this introduction, the complete range of vertebrate animals is tabulated under general headings of amphibians, reptiles, birds and mammals. Within each of these sections, species are grouped together by family. These

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tables constitute the core of the book, with the conservation status of each animal indicated for all states and territories, by means of codes positioned in columns adjacent to the species' names. These four sections are followed by another new feature in this edition, an Appendix that provides details of all newly described and accepted taxa. Finally, all animals are indexed twice – separately by both common and scientific names, grouped in the same order as in the body of the book.

By its nature, this is not a book that one would pick up for a spot of light reading. However, it will be an invaluable reference tool for both professionals and interested amateurs in a wide range of contexts dealing with vertebrates in natural environments.

The review copy of *Australian vertebrates* can be found henceforth within the Reference section of the FNCV Library, where it will no doubt be sought regularly by the Editors of *The Victorian Naturalist*.

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